

3 Prayer Strategies to Make Your Marriage Rock-Solid

Happy and lasting marriages always contain one core, but seemingly elusive, element: prayer. Prayer releases a relational resource into the marriage and family. Hearts are filled with peace; we have energy by which we interact in a quality way with those around us; and when prayer abounds, a deterrent is in place against potential attacks from the enemy. A prayerful marriage maintains a preemptive posture, a defensive boundary making relational intrusions less likely. How can we build a marriage like this?

1. Connect Individually with God

The first and foremost way to have a prayerful marriage is to keep your individual lives full of consistent encounter with God. Guys: Be a praying husband. Gals: Be a praying wife. The result: Your marriage will be prayerful.

Each spouse seeking to abide in God's presence produces a life-giving flow in the marriage. It's virtually impossible for a married couple to grow stagnant in their relationship when each spouse is having fresh encounters with God. The joy of discovery becomes a source of strength to the marital bond. The more I personally discover the treasure I have in Christ, the more I have to invest in my marriage.

In our book *Longing for Eden: Embracing God's Vision in Your Marriage*, I said it this way: "When I'm filled to overflowing, my marriage gets the spillover. The more beautiful God looks to me, the more beautiful my wife looks to me." A useful metaphor for me is that of a contact lens; once inserted, your vision is transformed. When I'm seeing God rightly, perceiving His glory, every facet of my marriage is enhanced.

2. Stay Connected with Your Spouse

The second path to a prayerful marriage is to stay connected with your spouse.

Marriage is a holistic relationship. You can't get more comprehensive or integrated than a one-flesh union. Yet tragically, many couples fail to be intentional over the years to maintain a connection in the various lifelines of their marriage. Consider this quote from *Vertical Marriage*.

"We have observed that married couples, who seemed to have unending conversations while dating, oftentimes reach a place where they must be intentional in choosing to communicate. Life has transitioned, schedules are busy and we just don't talk like we used to. This is normal but must not be left unattended. Husbands and wives need to keep the lines open, from everyday surface topics to the deeply felt matters of the heart."

To help facilitate these vital lines of communication, our premarital manual, *Vertical Marriage*, offers sample questions to ask each other. One of my favorite of the 13 topics is Friendship and Affection, with conversation starters such as, "Am I your best friend?" "How could our personalities better blend together?" "Do we hug, smile and laugh together enough?" These are meant to be a springboard into deeper dialogue and hopefully incubate ideas for setting goals or planning constructive activities to enhance your friendship.

A great companion topic to the above is Spiritual Identity & Unity. The goal here is to know the condition of one another's heart—What is God saying to you lately? Where are you most vulnerable to the enemy's attacks, and how can I specifically pray for you?

It may seem a bit awkward or unnatural at first to "interview" one another with such questions, but we have found that if couples train themselves in this fashion, it will soon become

organic—the questions will be modified to your style and become more fundamentally a part of your conversations without even having to use the list.

Being consistent in connecting makes for an easy pivot into prayer. Best friends are the best candidates to be prayer partners.

It is innately in each one of us, single or married, to be interwoven with like-minded souls. Invariably, when we have counseled couples in crisis, a common issue has been the slow erosion over time of meaningful attachment. Hence the imperative need for a godly routine of connecting. Priority one, if you're married, is your covenant partner.

3. Pray Together in a Way That Is Uniquely You

My third suggestion for couples is this: pray together in a way that is uniquely you. I know of couples who pray together for a few minutes before bed each night—heavenly pillow talk. This would not be the most productive for some of us who are fast-tracking into sleep mode once we hit the sheets. But again, do what works for you.

Other options I've heard of: prayer-walk together (exercise + prayer), read through a devotional (daily or weekly), pray spontaneously as you feel the need (while driving together, for example).

However you approach praying together, I would suggest starting with small goals, reachable ones, to build momentum. Planning too big (praying together for an hour a day) may lead to discouragement when goals are not met.

There are many avenues through which God desires to reveal Himself in our marriages. Without question, integrity of character and acts of service are vital, but the greatest avenue, I believe, is the unlimited power and reach of our prayer lives.

S. D. Gordon, in *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, says it best: “The greatest thing anyone can do for God and for man is to pray. It is not the only thing; but it is the chief thing ... You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do not more than pray until you have prayed.”

What are some questions you’re considering using to start conversation with your spouse and the Lord? {eoa}

Mike and Anne Rizzo have been in pastoral ministry for over 30 years and currently serve as directors of Marriage and Family Ministries at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. They carry a passion for personal mentoring, teaching, and raising up marriages that exalt the name of Jesus. Mike and Anne have three grown children and one grandchild, and are the authors of *Vertical Marriage: A Godward Preparation for Life Together* and *Longing for Eden: Embracing God’s Vision in Your Marriage*.